

Why I Left School

Educator Survey
Out-of-School Student Survey
Perceived Reasons for Not Graduating
Including
Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks

Presented to the Utah State Board of Education
October 2011

Educator Responses - Utah Drop-out Study – Summary Narrative

An informal drop-out survey was sent to 1,331 school personnel including middle and high school administrators, middle and high school counselors, special education directors, and youth-in custody directors completed in December, 2008. 505 persons (38%) responded to the survey with an average of 439 persons (87%) responding to all questions.

Respondents:

- 29.1% high school counselors
- 22.2% middle school counselors
- 15.6% high school principals
- 14.9% middle school principals

Note: The following information represents the response rates of persons surveyed.

Main reasons students drop-out of school (477 respondents – 94.5%):

78.8% of the respondents stated that it was lack of parental involvement/family support.

75% stated that the drop-out rate was due to lack of academic success.

67.7% indicated that life events (pregnancy, incarceration, health or family issues) were a factor.

64.6% stated that truancy was a factor.

“Lesser” reasons:

- 30.2% limited English proficiency
- 13.6% size of school
- 9.4% UBSCT failure

Time period for students to drop-out of school (422 respondents - 83.6%):

Survey respondents indicated that students tend to leave at the end of the program year and do not return.

- 47.6% at the end of 8th grade

- 46% at the end of 7th grade

- 43.5% at the end of 9th grade

- 28.7% at the end of the 10th grade

In addition:

- 27.1% leave in the 11th grade during the 3rd quarter

- 37.3% leave in the 12th grade during the 2nd quarter

Note: the above is “perception” data of the respondents. The Clearinghouse data indicate that the majority of students drop-out in the 11th and 12th grades. However, this data may actually reflect the “final drop-out” for repeat/serial drop - out students.

Methods used to identify students who may be at risk of dropping-out (463 respondents - 91.7%):

- 94% attendance
- 90.1% failed core academic courses
- 45.1% parental involvement
- 37.8% suspensions and expulsions data

Local level personnel primarily involved in the identification of at-risk students (417 respondents - 82.5%):

- 70% counselor
- 58% principal
- School level intervention strategy/tools used to reduce the possibility of students dropping-out:
 - 88.9% review of academic records to reduce academic failure
 - 78.4% review of attendance records to reduce behavior leading to truancy

“Lesser” used strategies:

- 48% parent outreach
- 47.8% school-wide positive behavioral support programs
- 39.4% learning communities
- 38.1% encouragement of students to participate in extracurricular activities
- 36.1% adult/student mentoring programs

Effective and least effective drop-out prevention strategies (422 respondents – 83.6%):

Responders reported that the most effective strategies to reducing drop-outs include:

- 46.9% review of academic records to reduce academic failure
- 43.1% review of attendance records to reduce truancy
- 37.4% adult/student mentoring programs
- 37.2% school-wide positive behavioral support programs
- 36.5% outreach to parents encouraging their school involvement
- 33.5% learning communities
- 33.1% extra-curricular activities

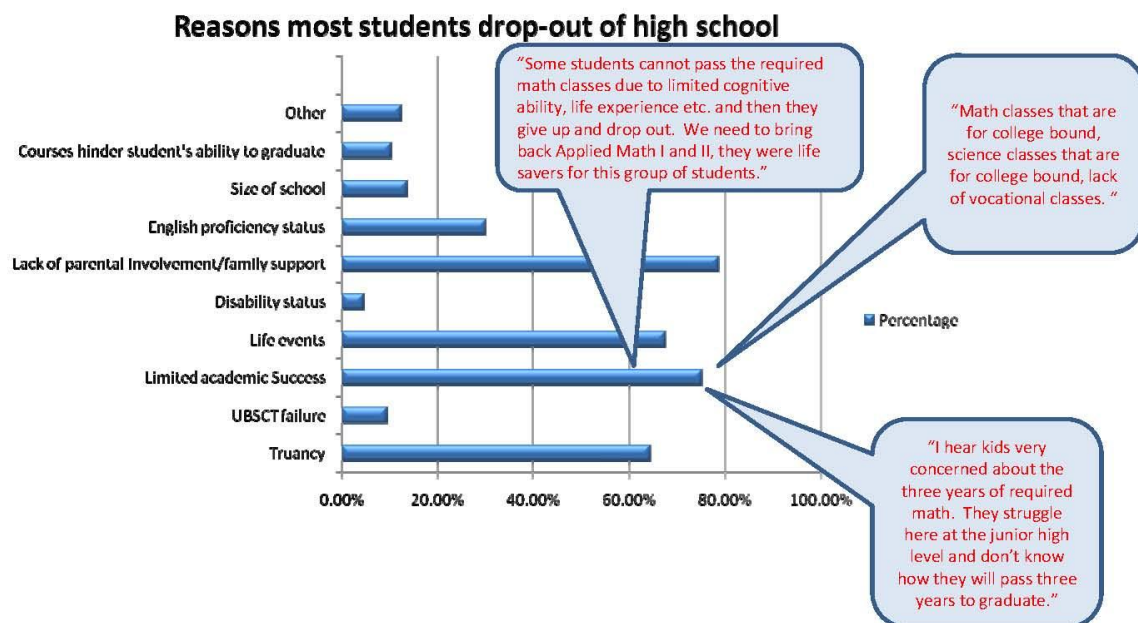
Reported least effective strategies included:

- 9.7% learning communities
- 6.1% adult/student mentoring programs
- 5.7% extra-curricular activities
- 5.3% outreach to parents encouraging their school involvement
- 3.1% review of attendance records to reduce truancy
- 2.0% school-wide positive behavioral support programs
- 1.8% review of academic records to reduce academic failure

90.8% of respondents felt that tutoring and counseling were the most effective intervention to impact drop - out retention (responders 434 – responders - 86%)

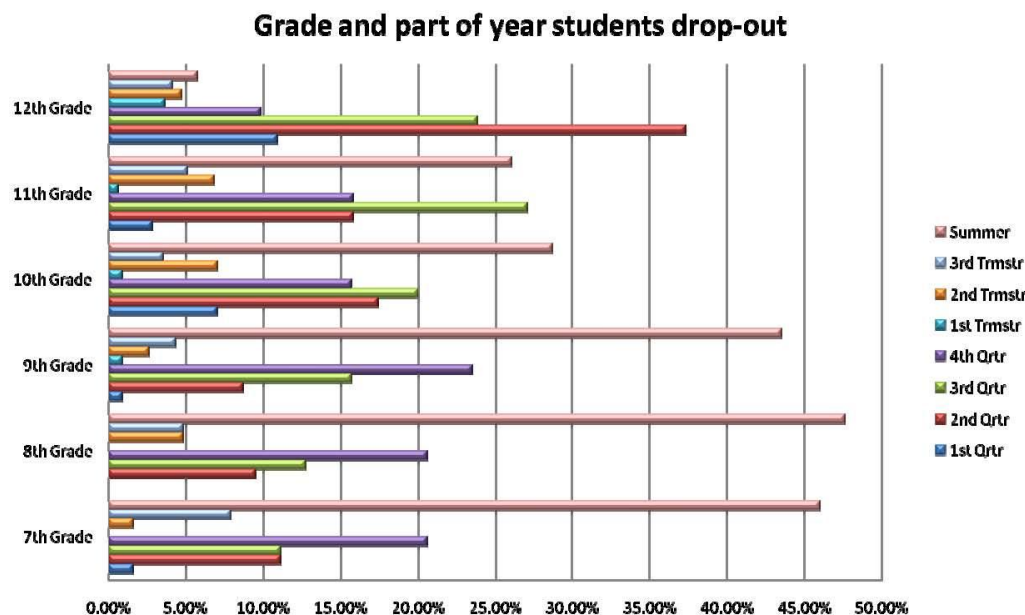
52% of the respondents believe that students should have specific pathways and academic standards. Of these 28.6% felt that this should occur in the 9th grade while 27.7% believe it should occur in the 10th grade.

1. In your opinion, why do most students drop out of school (list all that apply)?



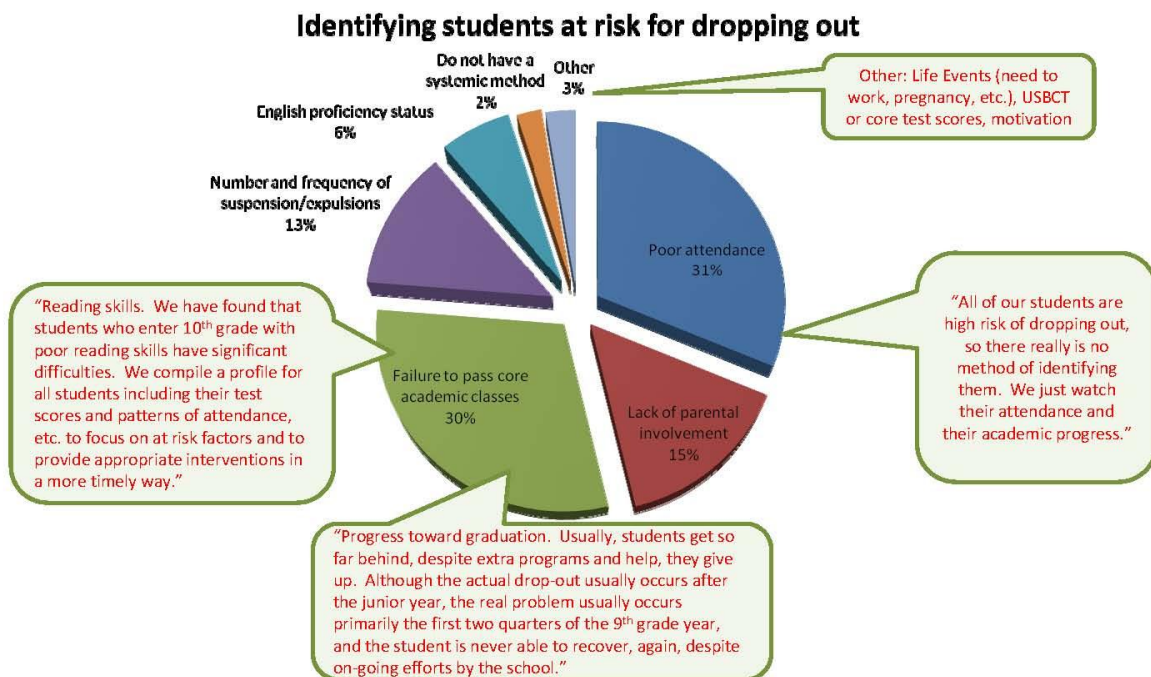
Data compiled from a Drop-out Survey conducted 12/2008. Surveyed participants included: middle and senior high school principals-charter and district, middle and senior high school counselor,-charter and district, middle and senior high school special education directors-charter and district and youth-in-custody directors.

2. In which grade and part of school year do the majority of students in your program drop out of school? (qtr = quarter)



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3. How do you identify students who are at risk for dropping out?

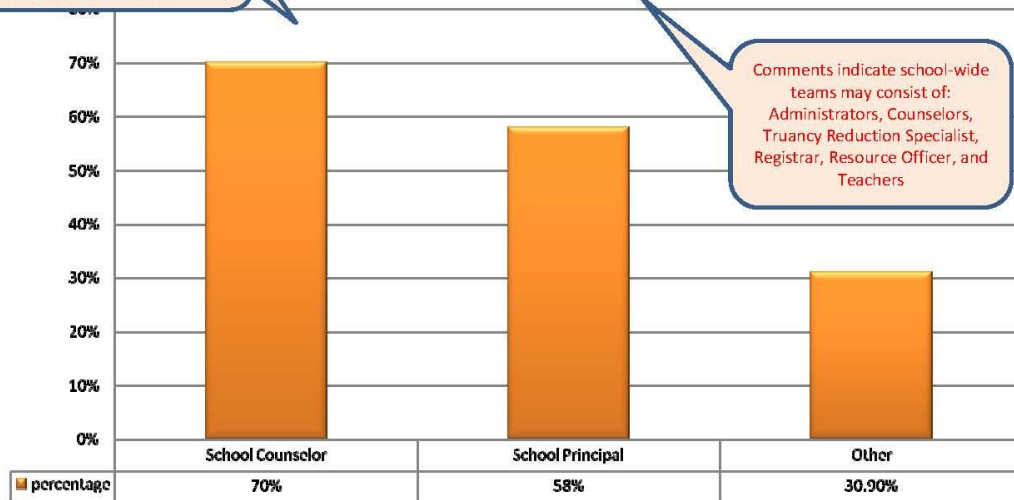


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4. At your local school, if you have a systemic method for identifying students at risk, who is responsible for implementing the program?

Although the graph shows counselors as the group most responsible for identifying students at risk, comments from the survey indicate that in many locations it is a school-wide team effort.

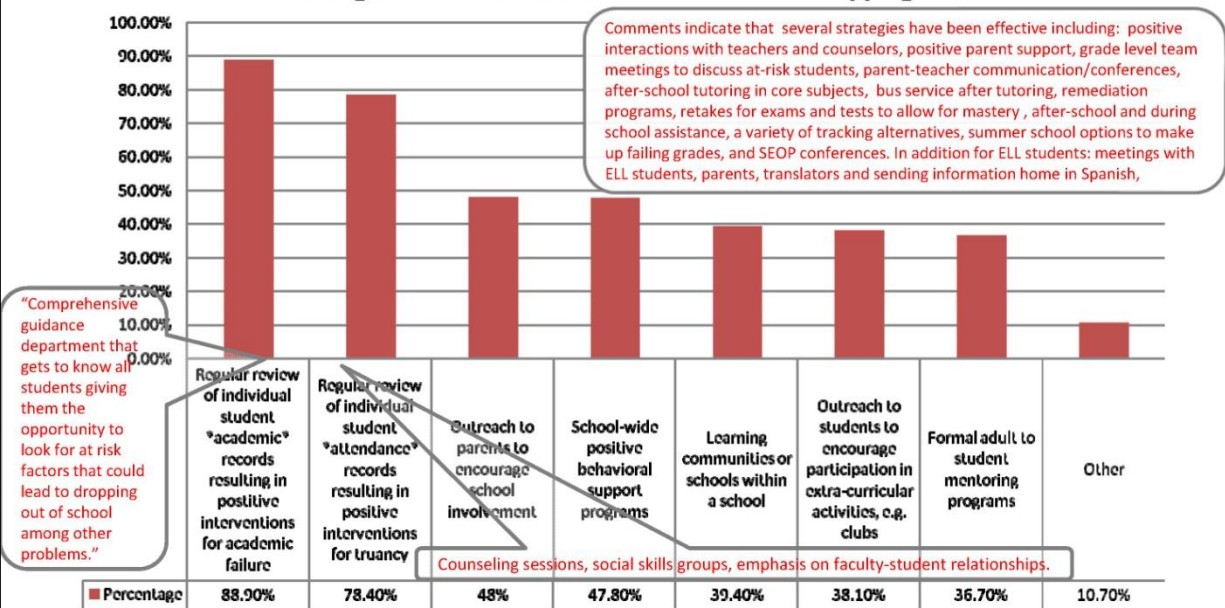
Staff identifying at-risk students



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5. Which of the following strategies have been used consistently and with fidelity in your program to reduce the possibility of students dropping out?

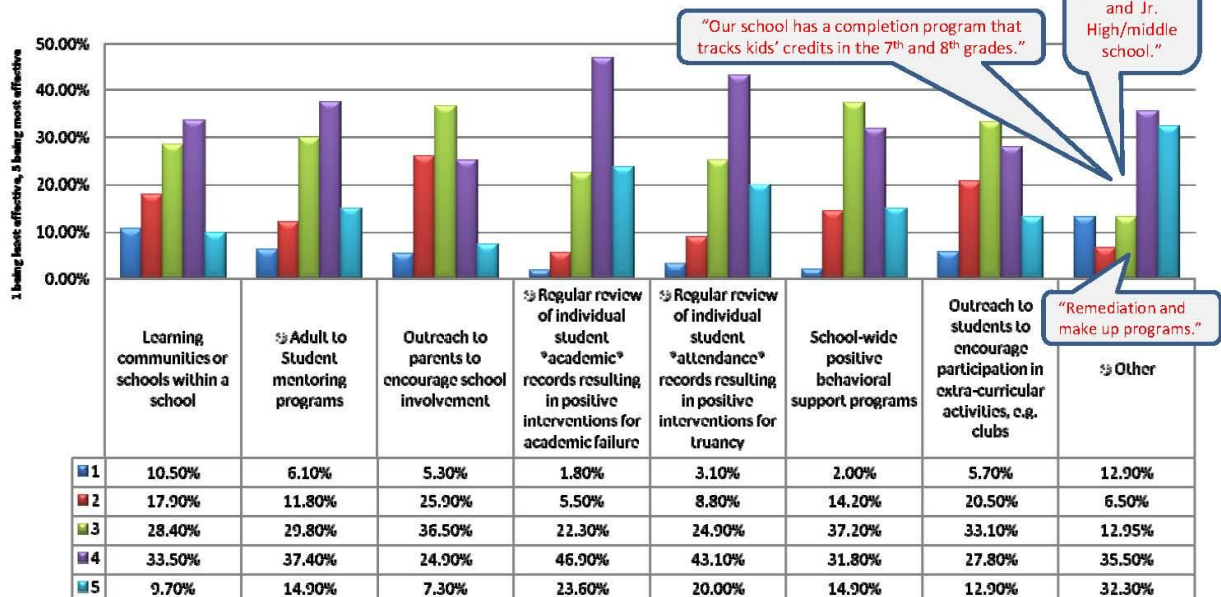
Strategies used to reduce the risk of students dropping out



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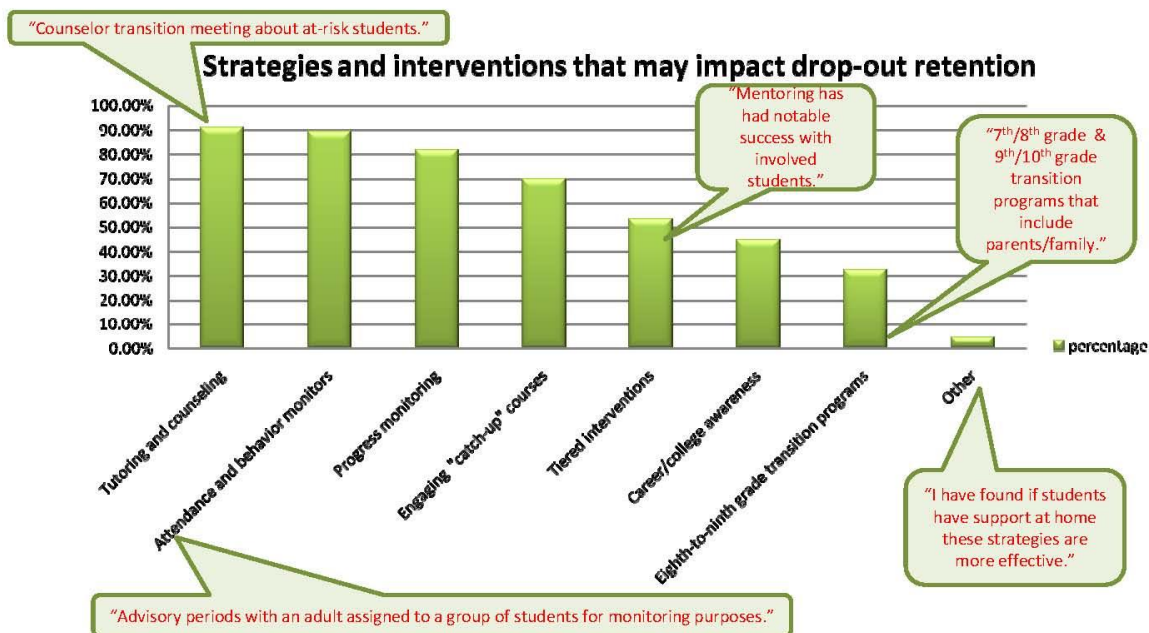
6. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least effective, please rate the effectiveness of the drop-out prevention strategies that have been implemented. ☺ = Strategies identified as effective or highly effective.

Effectiveness of Identified Strategies



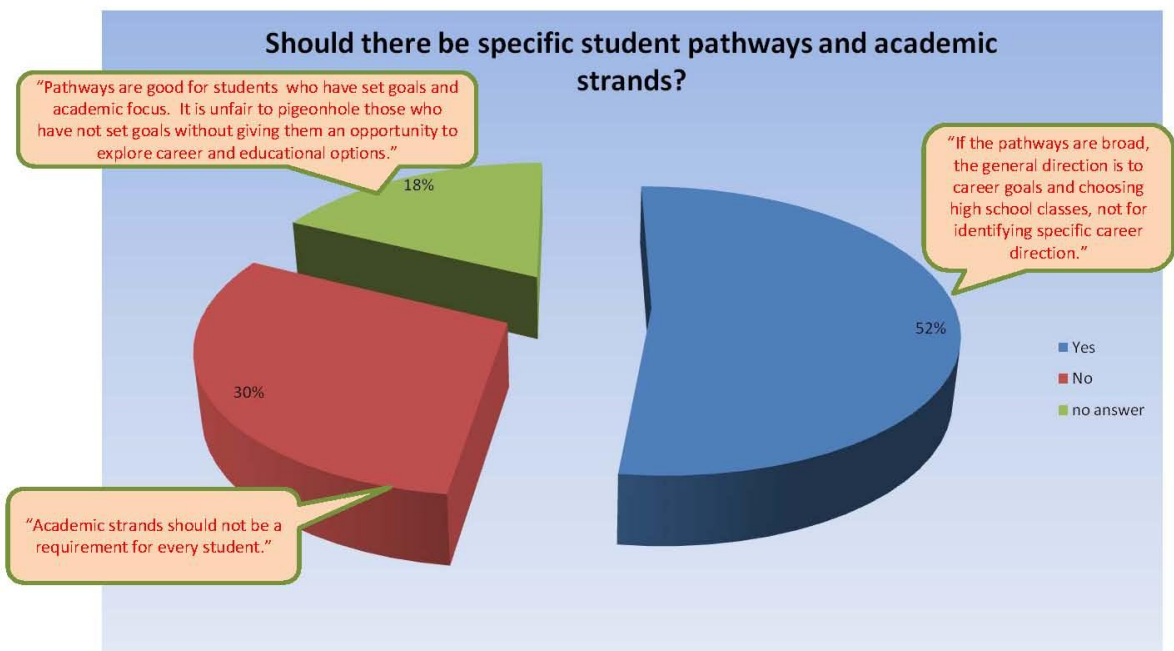
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7. There are several strategies and interventions that may impact drop-out retention. Of the following mark all that you see as valuable and vital to your program.



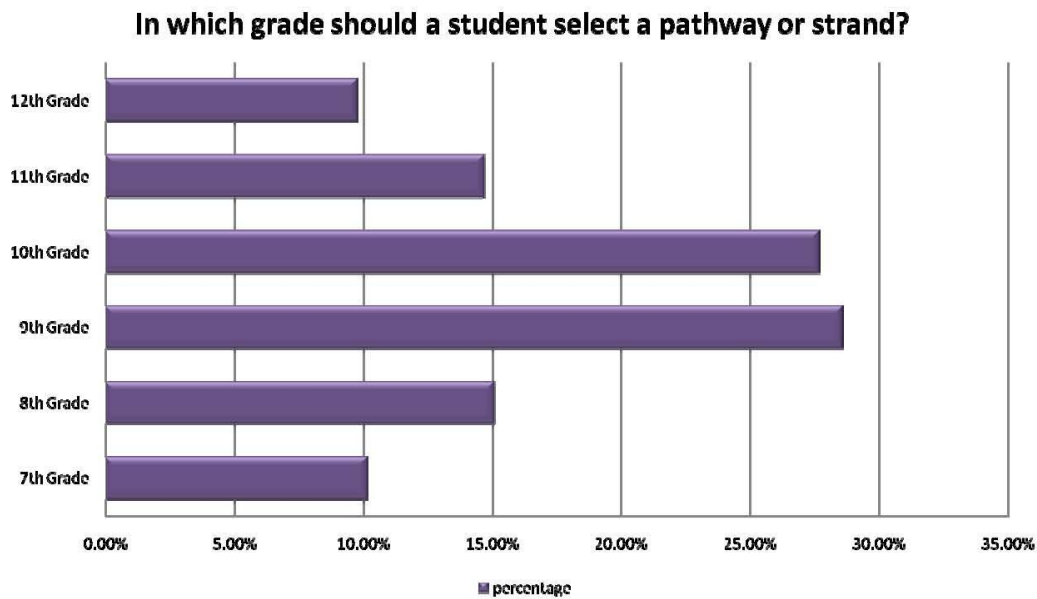
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8. Should there be specific student pathways and academic strands for students (yes or no)? In which grade should a student select a pathway or strand (7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th).



Data compiled from a Drop-out Survey conducted 12/2008. Surveyed participants included: middle and senior high school principals-charter and district, middle and senior high school counselor,-charter and district, middle and senior high school special education directors-charter and district and youth-in-custody directors.

8. Should there be specific student pathways and academic strands for students (yes or no)? In which grade should a student select a pathway or strand (7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th).



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Why I Left School Student Data Summary

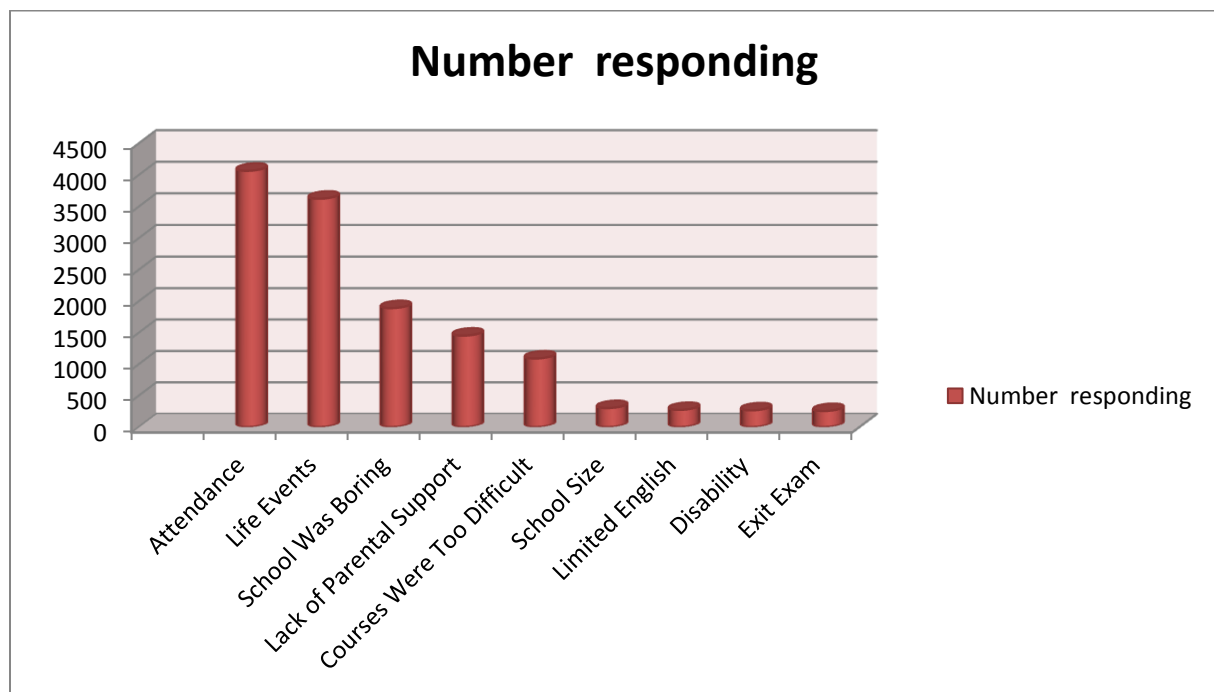
Between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010 persons accessing either adult education programs or GED Testing Centers were asked to complete an informal 9-question survey defining why they had left a K-12 program of instruction.

In addition to identifying their gender and age clients were asked to identify any/all of the following reasons of why they left school:

- Attendance
- Life events including pregnancy, incarceration, health or family issues
- Disability
- Lack of parental support
- Limited English skills
- Size of school
- Courses were too difficult (which courses)
- School was boring and why
- Other reasons

Detailed perceptions regarding the above were allowed.

Responses were collected from 8,160 persons ages 16-77. The categories of perceptions were as follows:



Why I Left School

To help us better understand why students leave K-12 schools, please fill in all of the following that apply to you personally.

My age is 16

I am male ☒ female ☐

Name of this Adult Education program is 6-

I left school because:

Reason(s)	Yes/No
1. Attendance issues	Yes
2. I failed the UBSCT and did not see any reason to stay in school.	
3. Life events: (e.g. pregnancy, incarceration, health or family issues)	
4. Disability	
5. Lack of parental support	
6. Limited English skills	
7. Size of school	
8. Courses were too hard. (Which courses? Please list.)	
9. School was boring. Why?	
10. Other. (Please explain) School was too stress full And the school I last attended they would not follow my medical problems, becaus I have stomach problems and sometime I would not make it to class on time so I would get in trouble a lot.	

Why I Left School

To help us better understand why students leave K-12 schools, please fill in all of the following that apply to you personally.

My age is 30

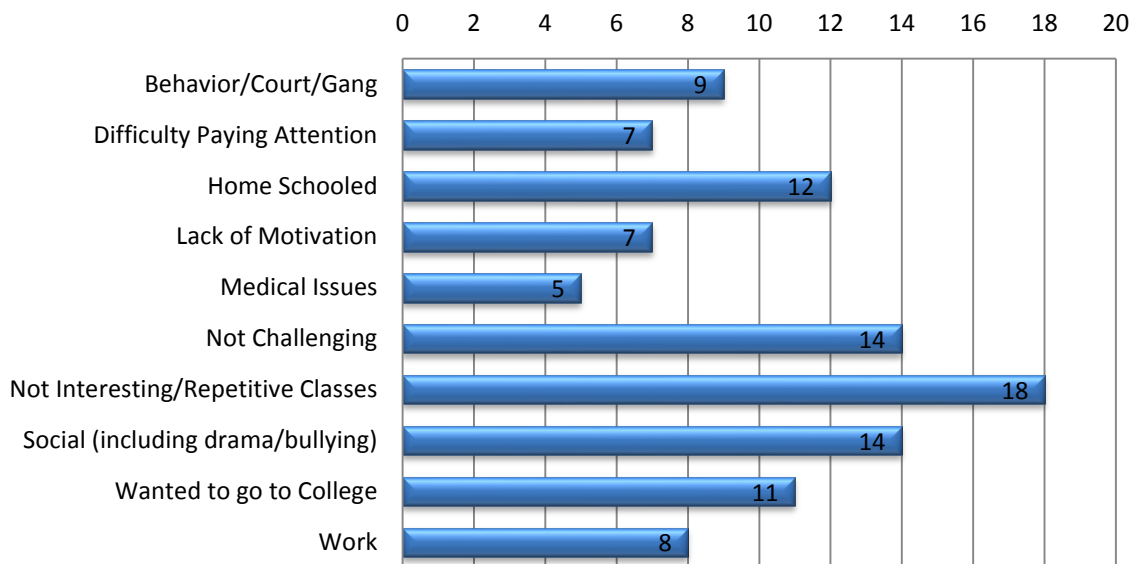
I am male X female

Name of this Adult Education program is

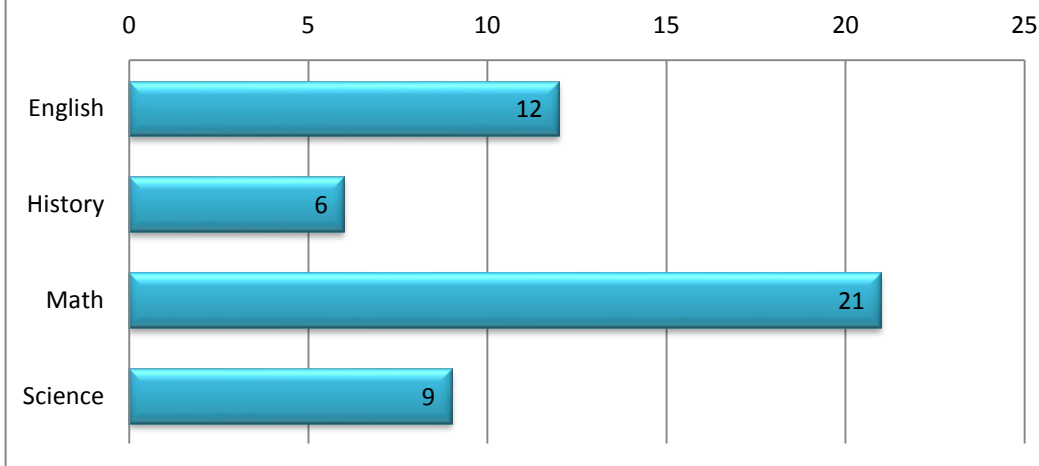
I left school because:

Reason(s)	Yes/No
1. Attendance issues	Yes
2. I failed the UBST and did not see any reason to stay in school.	NO
3. Life events: (e.g. pregnancy, incarceration, health or family issues)	NO
4. Disability	NO
5. Lack of parental support	NO
6. Limited English skills	NO
7. Size of school	NO
8. Courses were too hard. (Which courses? Please list.)	NO
9. School was boring. Why? <i>Not one on one could not understand Most of what I was told</i>	Yes
10. Other: (Please explain)	

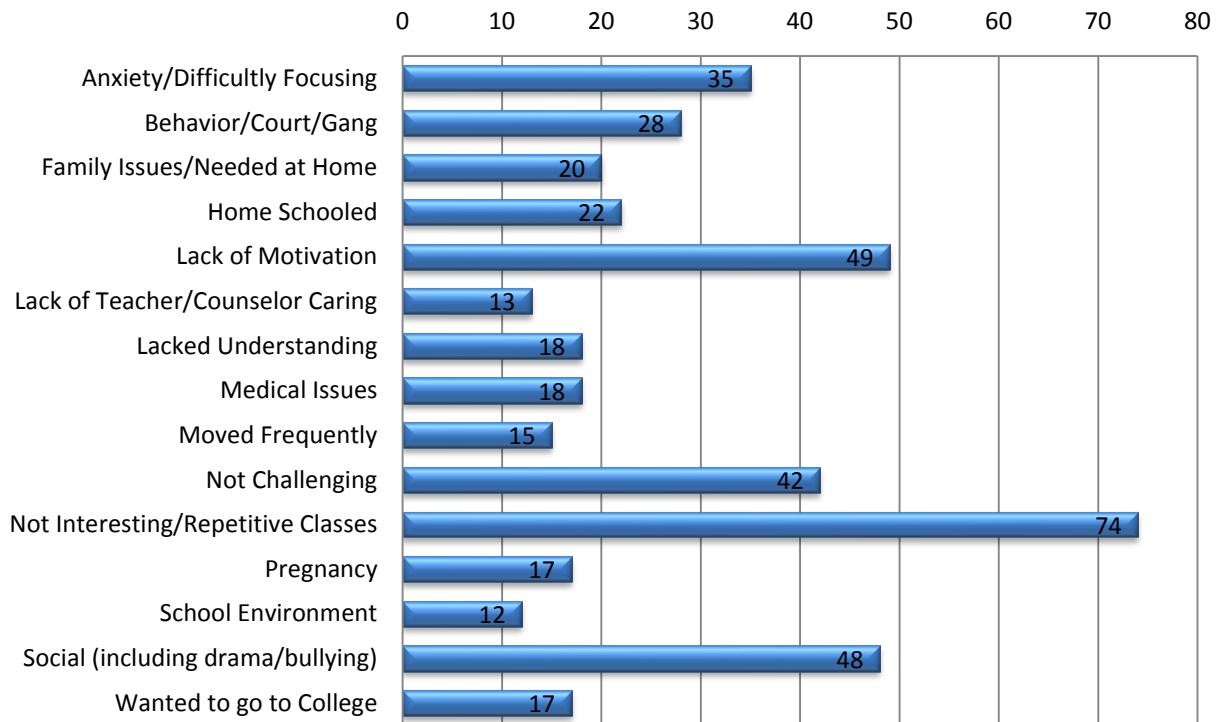
Percieved Reasons for Not Graduating-Age 16



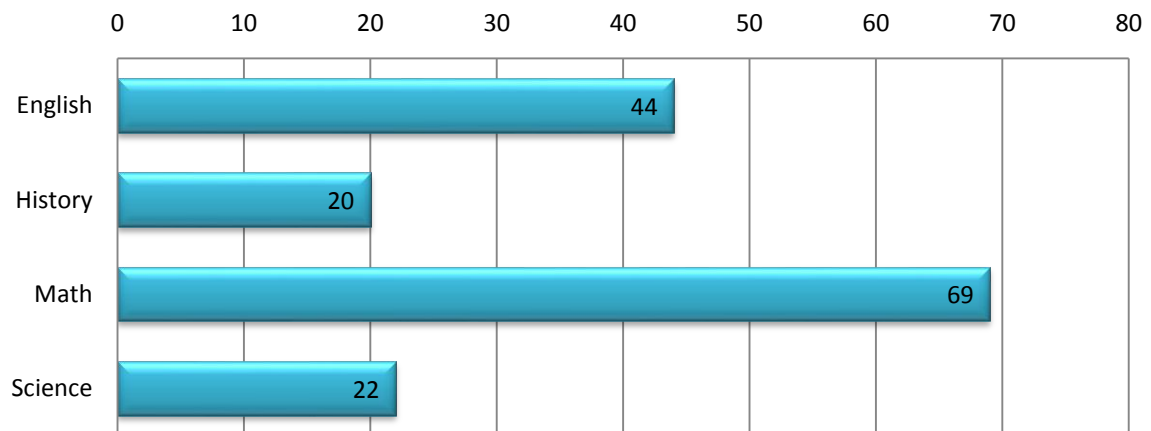
Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks to Graduation--Age 16



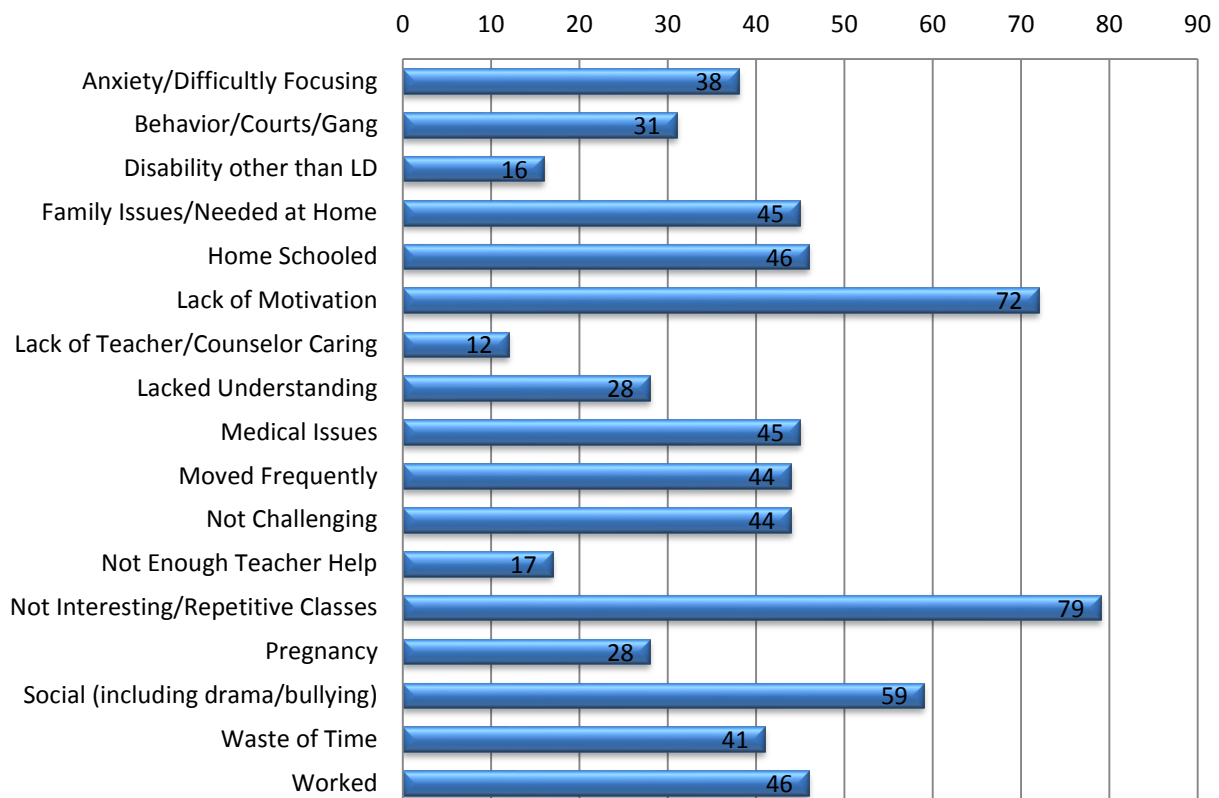
Perceived Reasons for Not Graduating--Age 17



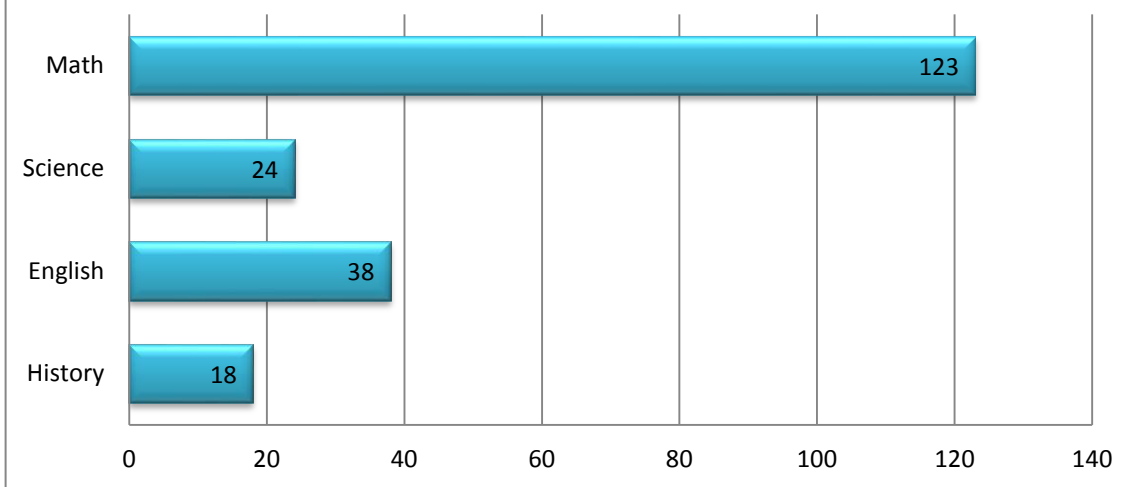
Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks to Graduation--Age 17



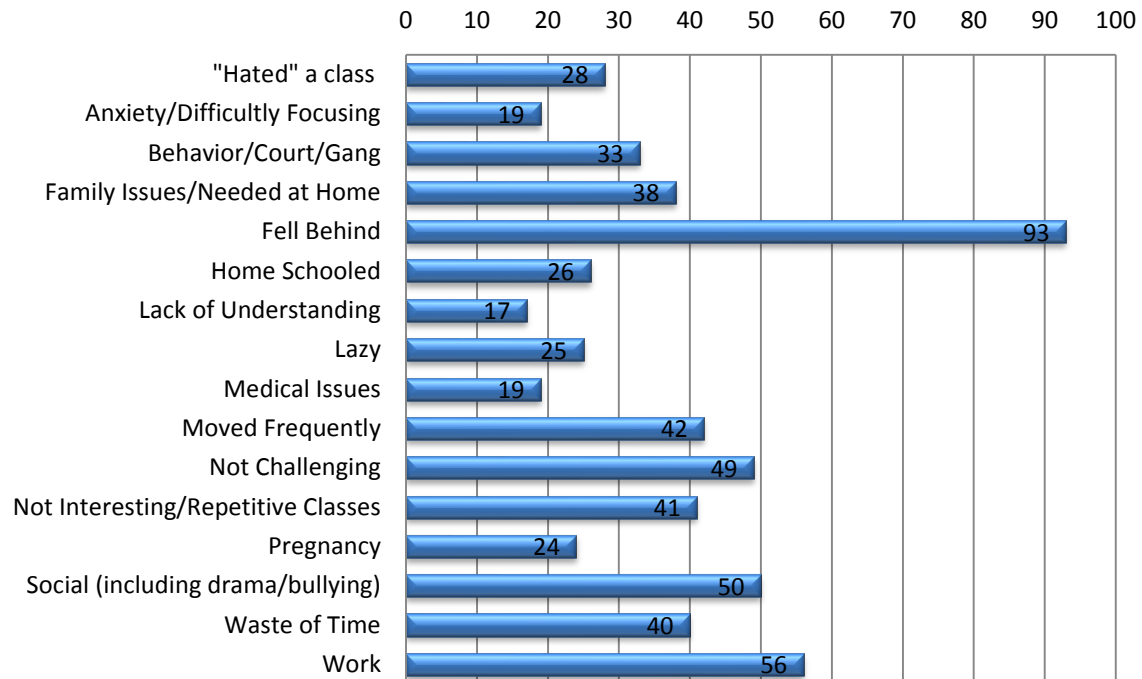
Perceived Reasons for Not Graduating--Age 18



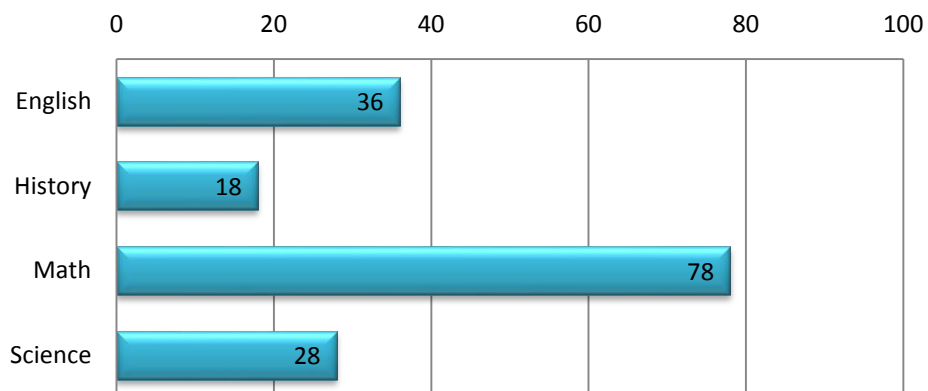
Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks to Graduation--Age 18



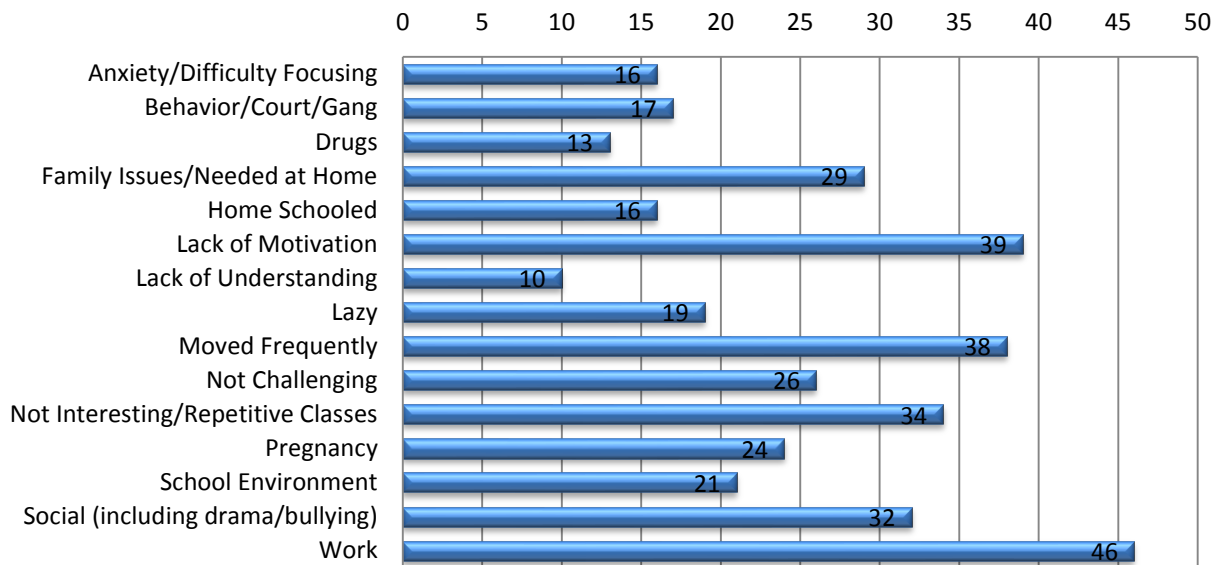
Perceived Reasons for Not Graduating--Age 19



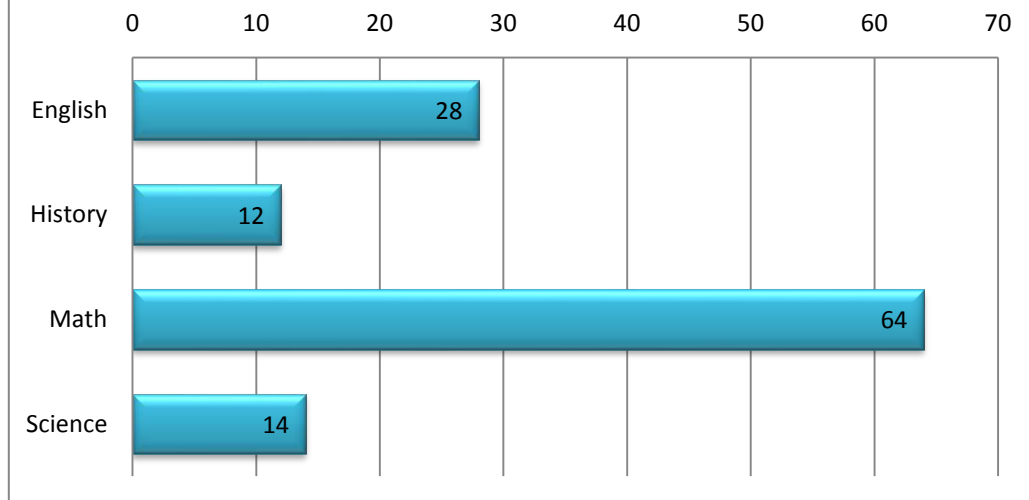
Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks to Graduation--Age 19



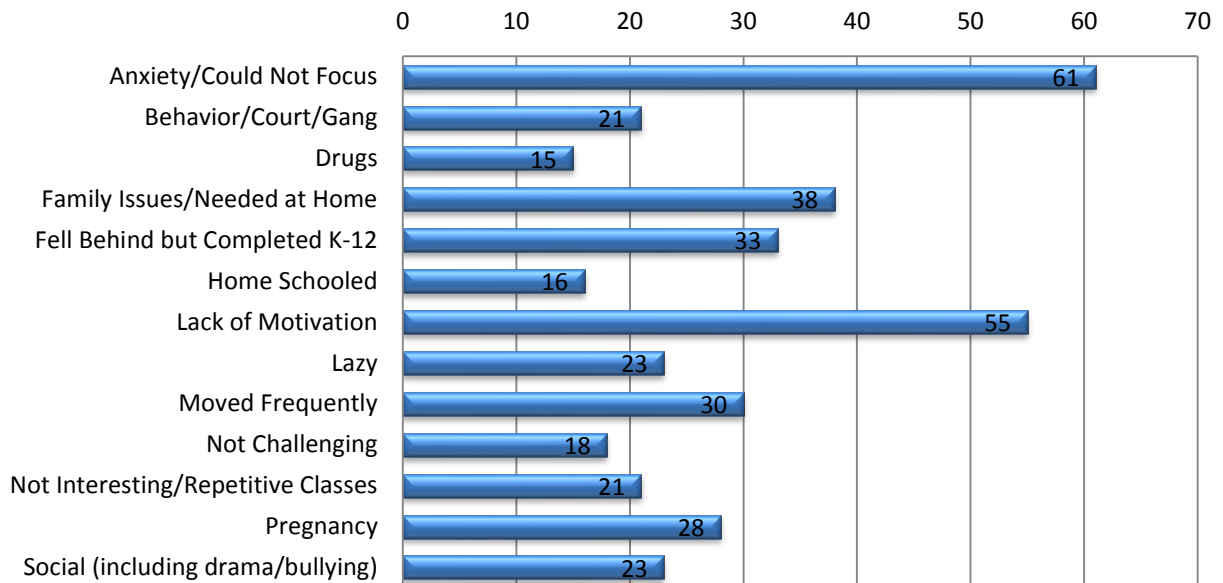
Perceived Reasons for Not Graduating--Age 20



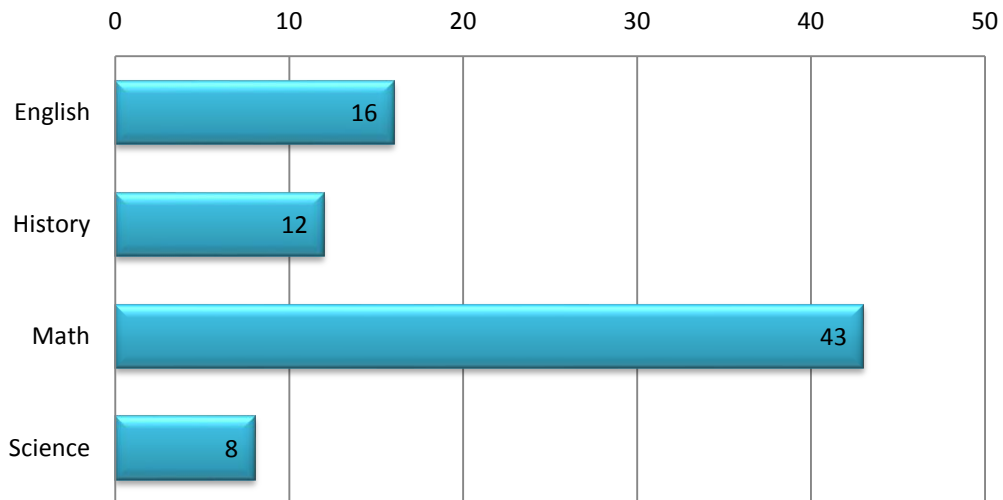
Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks to Graduation--Age 20



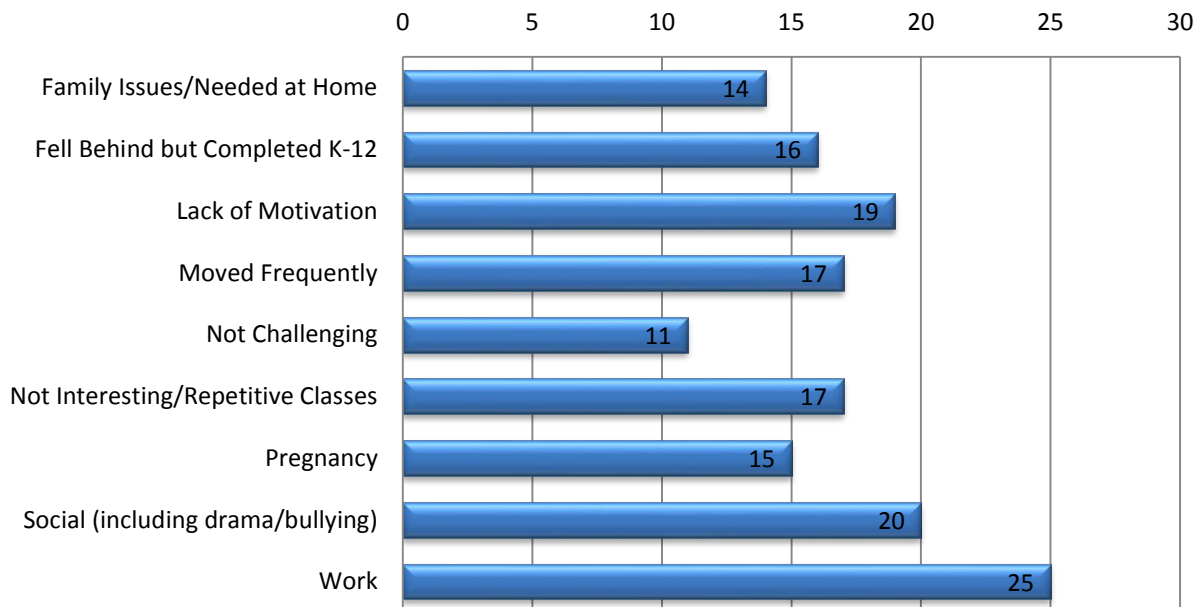
Perceived Reasons for Not Graduating--Age 21



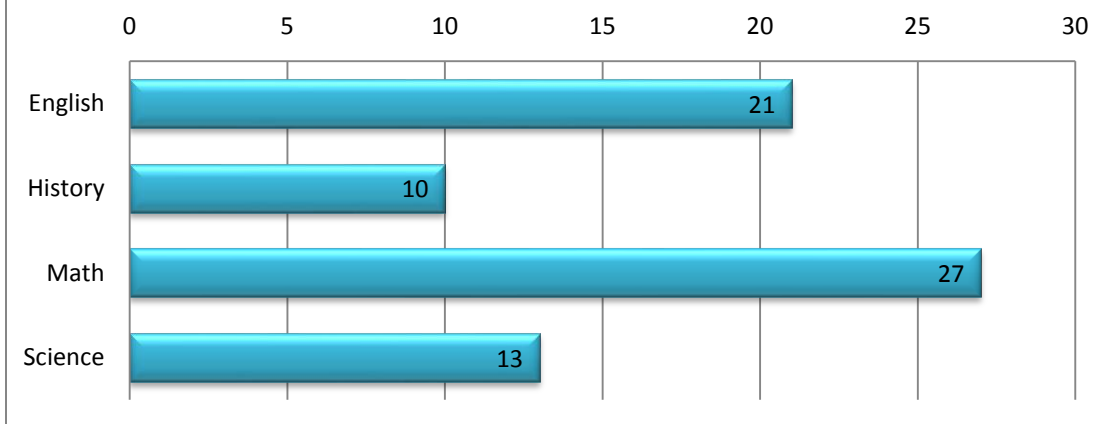
Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks to Graduation--Age 21



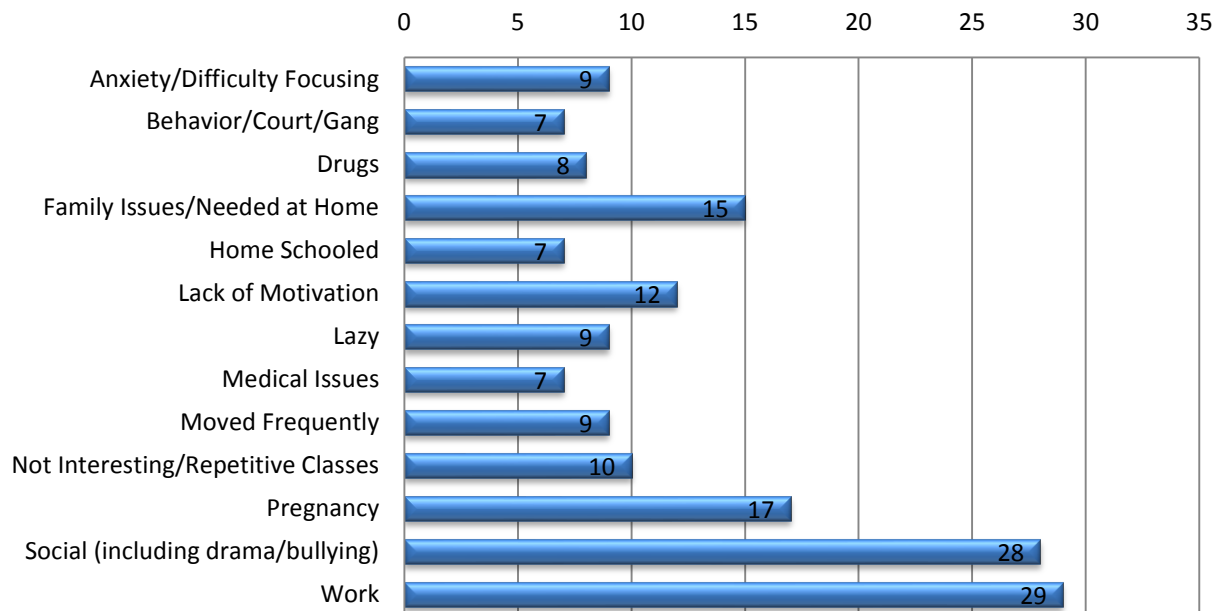
Perceived Reasons for Not Graduating--Age 22



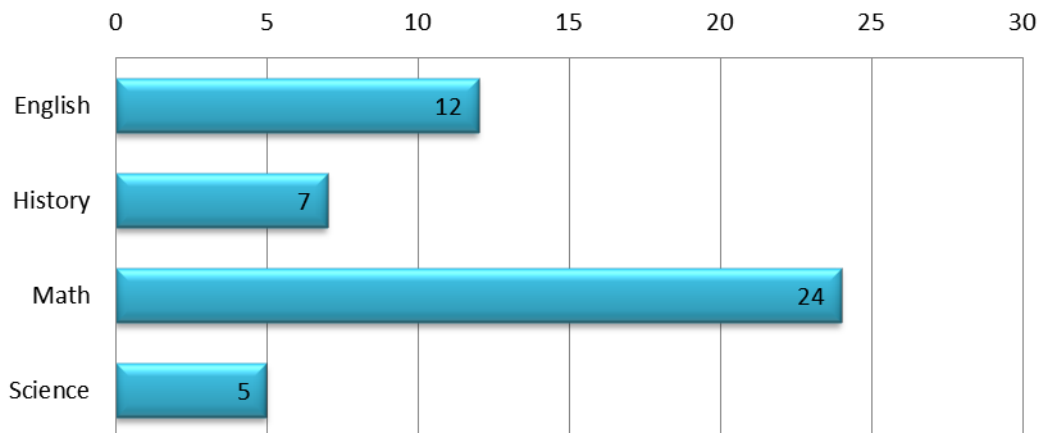
Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks to Graduation--Age 22



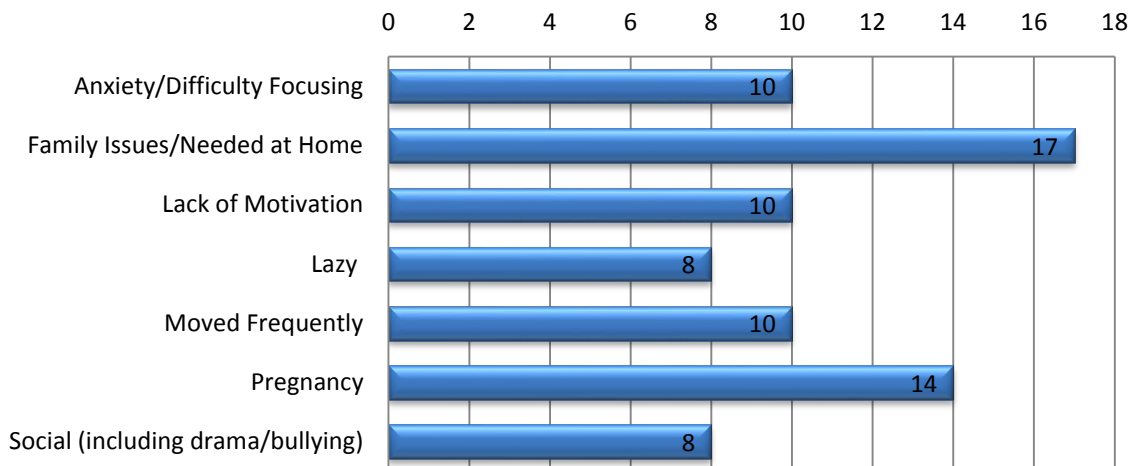
Perceived Reasons for Not Graduating--Age 23



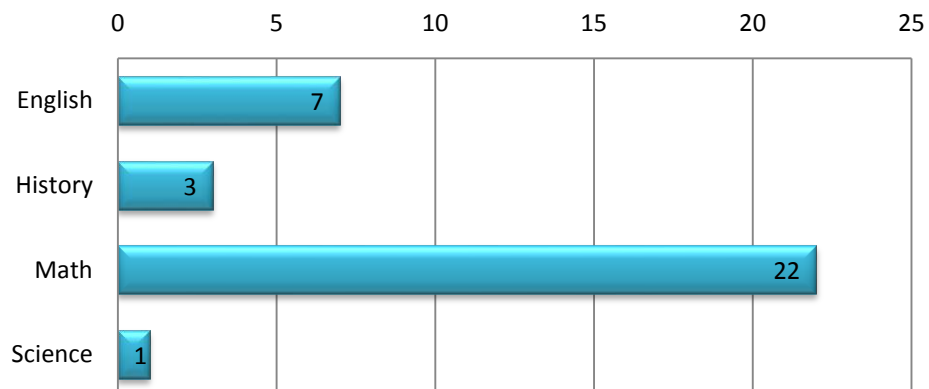
Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks to Graduation--Age 23



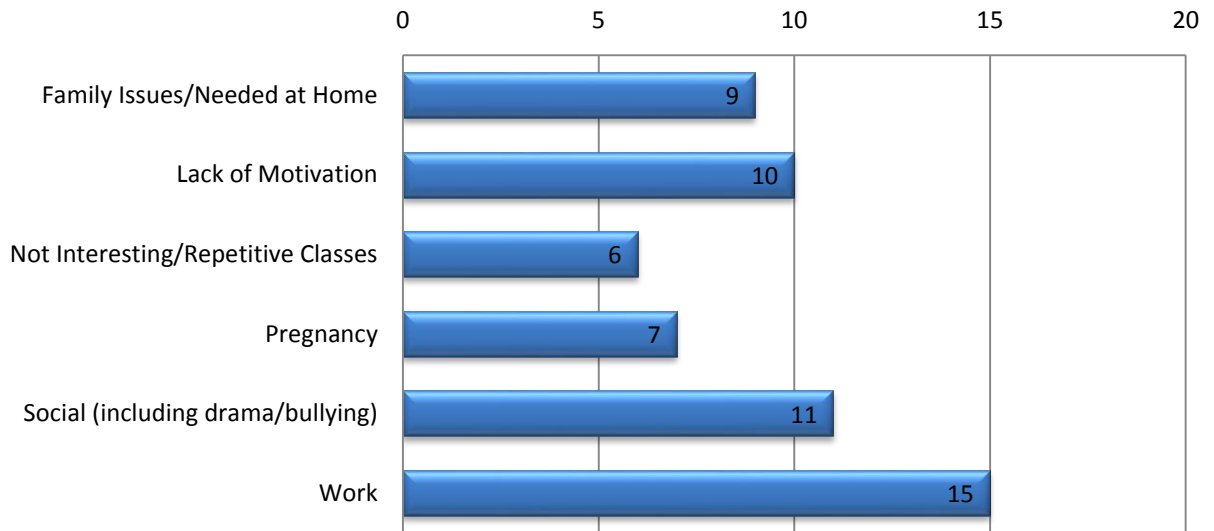
Perceived Reasons for Not Graduating--Age 24



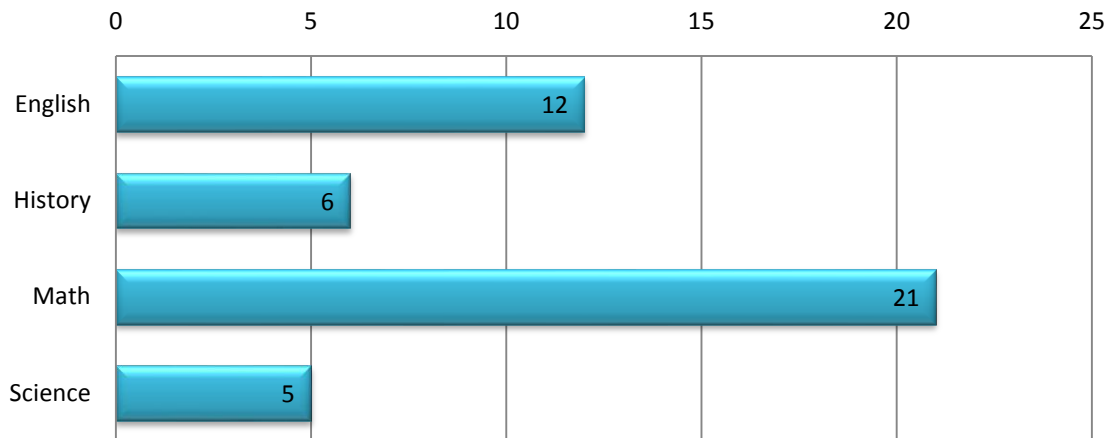
Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks to Graduation--Age 24



Perceived Reasons for Not Graduating--Age 25



Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks to Graduation--Age 25



Perceived Reasons for Not Graduating Summary by Age

- Age 16**
 - 228 16-yr-old survey responders
 - 167 of the 228 responders provided reasons
 - The 167 responders generated 503 specific comments
- Age 17**
 - 950 17-yr-old survey responders
 - 515 of the 950 responders provided reasons
 - The 515 responders generated 653 specific comments
- Age 18**
 - 1,493 18-yr-old survey responders
 - 950 of the 1,493 responders provided reasons
 - The 950 responders generated 1,048 specific comments
- Age 19**
 - 1,000 19-yr-old survey responders
 - 648 of the 1,000 responders provided reasons
 - The 648 responders generated 748 specific comments
- Age 20**
 - 673 20-yr-old survey responders
 - 427 of the 673 responders provided reasons
 - The 427 responders generated 482 specific comments
- Age 21**
 - 525 21-yr-old survey responders
 - 320 of the 525 responders provided reasons
 - The 320 responders generated 503 specific comments
- Age 22**
 - 341 22-yr-old survey responders
 - 211 of the 341 responders provided reasons
 - The 211 responders generated 238 specific comments
- Age 23**
 - 297 23-yr-old survey responders
 - 192 of the 297 responders provided reasons
 - The 192 responders generated 216 specific comments
- Age 24**
 - 229 24-yr-old survey responders
 - 135 of the 229 responders provided reasons
 - The 135 responders generated 150 specific comments
- Age 25**
 - 205 25-yr-old survey responders
 - 118 of the 205 responders provided reasons
 - The 118 responders generated 105 specific comments

Courses Perceived as Stumbling Blocks to Graduation Summary by Age

- Age 16**
 - 228 16-yr-old survey responders
 - 54 of the 228 responders listed courses perceived as stumbling blocks
 - The 54 responders provided 35 comments listing course names
- Age 17**
 - 950 17-yr-old survey responders
 - 109 of the 950 responders listed courses perceived as stumbling blocks
 - The 109 responders provided 178 comments listing course names
- Age 18**
 - 1,493 18-yr-old survey responders
 - 176 of the 1,493 responders listed courses perceived as stumbling blocks
 - The 176 responders provided 251 comments listing course names
- Age 19**
 - 1,000 19-yr-old survey responders
 - 112 of the 1,000 responders listed courses perceived as stumbling blocks
 - The 112 responders provided 167 comments listing course names
- Age 20**
 - 673 20-yr-old survey responders
 - 84 of the 673 responders listed courses perceived as stumbling blocks
 - The 84 responders provided 121 comments listing course names
- Age 21**
 - 525 21-yr-old survey responders
 - 60 of the 525 responders listed courses perceived as stumbling blocks
 - The 60 responders provided 78 comments listing course names
- Age 22**
 - 341 22-yr-old survey responders
 - 40 of the 341 responders listed courses perceived as stumbling blocks
 - The 40 responders provided 75 comments listing course names
- Age 23**
 - 297 23-yr-old survey responders
 - 32 of the 297 responders listed courses perceived as stumbling blocks
 - The 32 responders provided 48 comments listing course names
- Age 24**
 - 229 24-yr-old survey responders
 - 29 of the 229 responders listed courses perceived as stumbling blocks
 - The 29 responders provided 33 comments listing course names
- Age 25**
 - 205 25-yr-old survey responders
 - 30 of the 205 responders listed courses perceived as stumbling blocks
 - The 30 responders provided 44 comments listing course names

Stated perceived common themes within the categories:

Family issues
Pregnancy
Loss of a mother or father/illness of loved one
Didn't feel challenged
Classes were boring
Teachers were boring
Failed too many courses
Did not have enough credits to graduate
Moved/credits didn't transfer
Got kicked out of school
Got kicked out of home
Decided work was more important
Had to work to support family members (parents, siblings)
Lost focus/motivation
Felt the same things were being taught over and over again
Weren't interested/lost interest
Wanted to enter college earlier than their cohort
Social anxiety
Health problems
Personal problems
No friends
Didn't have fun
Home Schooled
Felt the instructional hour was too long/many didn't like sitting in a classroom for a long time
Had children of their own
Did not get enough teacher help
Learning/other disabilities; ADD; ADHD
Difficulty getting up in the morning
Laziness
Many thought school seemed pointless
Many didn't leave school, but they couldn't graduate/credit or attendance issues
Suspensions/expulsions
Many didn't like being there –sheer fact that school environment was troublesome
Transportation issues
Moved out of or into the country
Negative treatment by faculty
Drugs
Too easy
Too hard
Want more hands-on work
Felt classes didn't apply to them
Trouble concentrating
Failed proficiency tests
Incarceration

Attendance issues
More interested in social life
Went to unaccredited private schools
Very ill/attendance issues
Not understanding instructions and/or assignments
Problems with the people at school (other students, administration, counselors etc.)
Want to start life early
High school "drama"
"Sluffed" classes
Teachers lacked subject specific expertise
Already knew what was being taught
Teachers talked a lot but did not make courses interesting
Bullying issues
Got married
Depression
School wasn't important at the time
Gangs
Fighting
Felt like didn't fit in
Short attention spans
Girlfriend became pregnant and had to start working
Court involvement
Teaching methods weren't interesting
Started college early
Anxiety
Had to work to support self
Too old to attend
Didn't do homework
Some were more interested in music
Boring
Too much bookwork
Didn't feel they were learning anything
Hung out with wrong crowd/friends
Bad grades/failing classes
Homelessness
Lack of parental support
Injuries/car accidents
Friends were more important than school
Teachers' attitude - didn't seem like they wanted to be there
Some just wanted to party

Overall Arching Summary Comments

In review of data from both surveys it appears that attendance is the major factor that leads to a student not meeting with academic completion. However, after further review lack of attendance is not the overall arching reason for non-completion but rather the “measurement of non-completion. Rather, course content, course delivery, home and social parameters are the factors that seem to create an educational environment not conducive to student success. Both the educator and the student surveys imply that math courses are the largest stumbling blocks that students struggle to complete. A wide range of home events contribute to lack of student completion as does social situations within the school setting.